

Paine relievers

Welcome qualified local professionals to steer college out of crisis

By **Augusta Chronicle Editorial Staff**

Tuesday, July 22, 2014

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Augusta's Paine College has been on probation since June. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges has cited years of violations in numerous areas, such as student financial aid, fiscal stability and institutional policy.

Probation is the final dire step before Paine could lose the coveted SACS accreditation it first won in 1931, nearly 50 years after its founding.

That's been the most public airing of Paine's problems.

What's been alleged about the school in more private circles has surfaced on a Web site called The Paine Project. The site's originators, and its alumni contributors who have chimed in, turn up the volume on accusations that until now have been only whispered. The veracity of those accusations is left to the site's visitors to determine.

But the very existence of the site underscores the depth of troubles the college is undergoing, and the urgency with which they need to be addressed.

This newspaper and many area citizens and businesses have long thrown support behind Paine, and not blindly. We have recognized what a great historic asset the school has been to the Augusta area. Paine has been a beacon of opportunity for students who have gone on to enrich the world with their wealth of knowledge and experience.

But now it's time for one of America's oldest black colleges to prove itself worthy of that support.

Paine could benefit immensely by, at the very least, inviting a select committee of local business people to figure out how to right the school's financial ship. Our community is full of qualified professionals who want to save Paine, and the institution's doors should be thrown open wide to provide that opportunity.

Augusta wants and needs Paine to succeed.